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Despite this success, some advocate removal of the waste without considering the likelihood that risks will be created that do not exist. If the existing armored cap were to be partially or fully removed, the waste under the armored cap could be disturbed by the construction activity, exposing the disturbed materials to potential storms or floods over the course of two hurricane seasons.

Moreover, impacted sediments would be suspended in the surrounding waterway. As a result, waste material completely contained today would be disturbed, creating environmental risks and potentially affecting the community. Additionally, this process could take up to 19 months, with removal requiring up to 17,500 heavytruck trips on congested local roads and highways.

But there is another option, which is to enhance the remedy that is working. Right now, the EPA is considering a proposal to make the existing protective cap permanent by adding armoring designed to withstand a 500-year flood event, protecting the cap from vessel traffic and continuing the existing program of regular monitoring and

This permanent capping approach is a proven, effective and protective remedy selected by the EPA for numerous other sediment remediation sites around the country for more than 20 years. Moreover, the San Jacinto armored cap will be one of the strongest constructed, with fortifications to withstand a 100-year hurricane event and a 500-year flood event. For context, consider the October 1994 flood qualified as a 50- to 100-year flood and Hurricane Ike was rated a two-year flood. Both of those events predate the installation of the protective cap.

Too often, rhetoric around the river's current status centers on technically unsupported claims. Environmental decision-making at this site, as well as others within the watershed, need to be centered on sound science and engineering principles that address the community's concerns in a thoughtful, logical manner while restoring the overall health of the system.

Keith, principal scientist for Anchor QEA, is project coordinator for the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study and Time Critical Removal Action of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site on behalf of International Paper Corp. and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corp.

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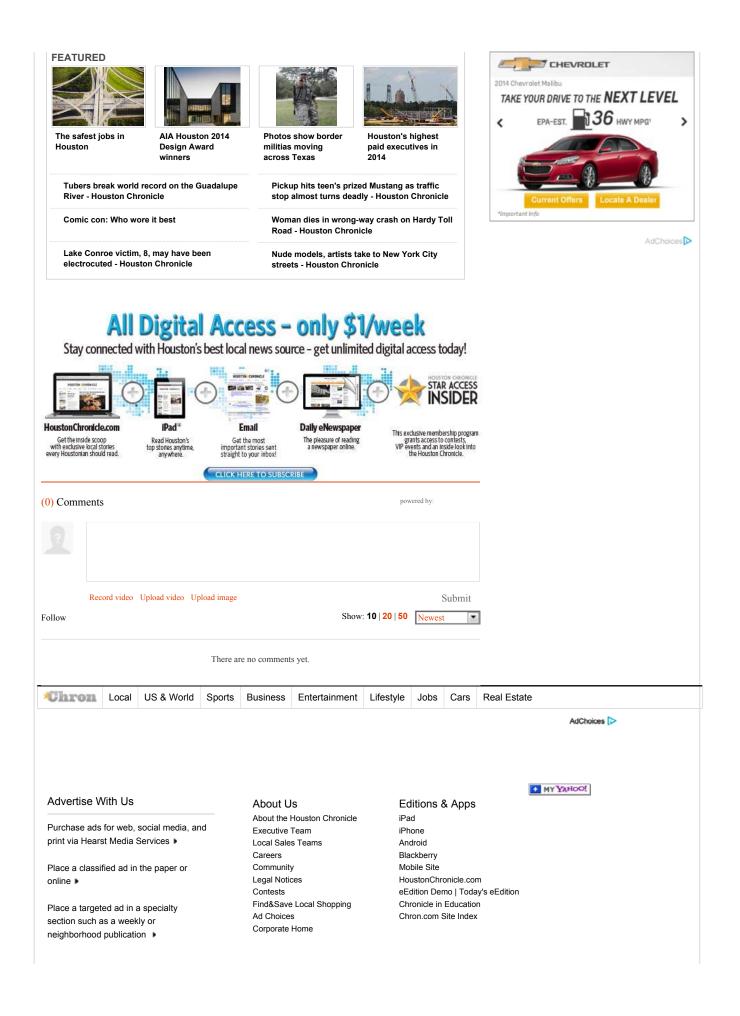






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